The Tonkawa and Austin: Questions about a Republic Square Camp

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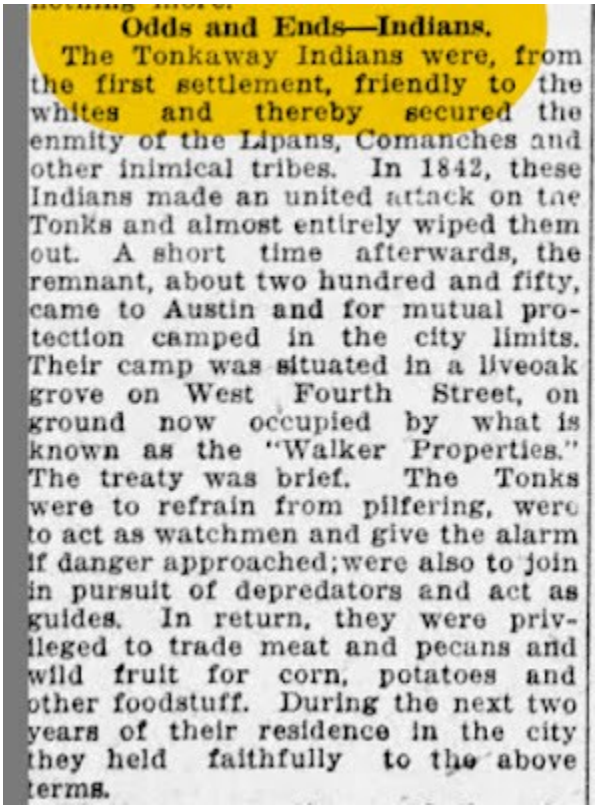

Odds and Ends—Indians.

The Tonkaway Indians were, from the first settlement, friendly to the whites and thereby secured the enmity of the Lipans, Comanches and other inimical tribes. In 1842, these Indians made an united attack on the Tonks and almost entirely wiped them out. A short time afterwards, the remnant, about two hundred and fifty, came to Austin and for mutual protection camped in the city limits. Their camp was situated in a liveoak grove on West Fourth Street, on ground now occupied by what is known as the "Walker Properties." The treaty was brief. The Tonks were to refrain from pilfering, were to act as watchmen and give the alarm if danger approached; were also to join in pursuit of depredators and act as guides. In return, they were privileged to trade meat and pecans and wild fruit for corn, potatoes and other foodstuff. During the next two years of their residence in the city they held faithfully to the above terms.

The entirety -- just 163 words -- of Walsh's paragraph from his 1924 article

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NOTE: This is research done for a possible historical marker requested by filmmaker Bob O'Dell for the story of the Tonkawa in early Austin. It is not a review of Tonkawa history. Rather it is a critical review (trying to make sense) of a specific article written in 1924 by W.C. Walsh, and historical errors / speculation / embellishments made by O'Dell based on that article. As this was research done with time limitations (decisions about the merits of a marker) there may be duplication across sections as the content was "refactored" (to use a software development term) as research evolved over time. As Einstein said, "Make it as simple as possible, but not simpler". Given the time limitations yet importance of this topic I had to err on the side of being thorough versus "simple as possible". References at the end are informal but substantive enough for follow-up.

Keywords:

#tonkawathemovie #Tonkawa #Austin-TonkawaFriendshipDay
#HowTheTonkawaTribeCametoLiveinAustinTexas

Overview

Sept. 12, 2024 members of the Tonkawa tribe from Oklahoma were in Austin for Austin-Tonkawa Friendship Day, a recognition of the friendship that has endured since Austin became the Texas Capital in 1839. The event was initiated by filmmaker Bob O'Dell who is working on a documentary about the tribe. Prior to the event O'Dell did an interview published in the newspaper, subtitled "Thanking the Tonkawa for saving the capital of Texas" (*Austin American Statesman*, May 7th, 2024, page D01). It was based on a white paper written by O'Dell and filed with the Austin History Center ("How The Tonkawa Tribe Came to Live in Austin Texas", Bob O'Dell, August 2, 2023 Version 1.0).

The *Statesman* piece ran before TCHC and O'Dell met to discuss a potential future historical marker. In this article I'll discuss a number of concerns about historical claims that were discussed with O'Dell, but unfortunately after the *American Statesman* article had already been published, and after O'Dell had reached out to the City of Austin's mayor, Travis County officials, conducted podcast interviews, etc.

These clarifications are important for any potential future historical marker, but in general to also correct, clarify and suggest further research needed on claims made in the article(s) which have already been made public.

Synopsis & Table of Contents

O'Dell's claims of an 1842-1844 Republic Square camp in Austin (or recently claiming 1842-1843) rest solely on a short paragraph (163 words), and principally a *single sentence,* from a 1924 article by W.C. Walsh. The Walsh article however makes an obvious and significant error (which O'Dell admits) making it uncredible for the claim, so corroborating evidence is needed.

O'Dell has provided no corroborating evidence of the camp. Our own research of primary sources of that time to support O'Dell's claim yields no support for a camp then. To the contrary, primary sources seem to place the Tonkawa in many places *other* than Austin from 1842 to 1844, but in particular in Bastrop; this is backed up with input from the Bastrop County Historical Commission. An alternate explanation of the Walsh article, or rather *O'Dell's interpretation* of the Walsh article, may be a camp from ca.1863 to 1865, during the Civil War, after some Tonkawa began migrating south into Texas for refuge after the Tonkawa Massacre of 1862 in Oklahoma. That southern migration ended with removal of the Tonkawa from Austin in 1867 during Reconstruction. All well documented. Another source that mentions the Republic Square camp, Mary Mitchell, part of the Joseph Robertson (mayor of Austin then) extended family, provide accounts of a camp that conflict with some of Walsh's details, and generally don't corroborate the 1842 to 1844 time frame.

O'Dell has chosen to cherry pick bits of the Walsh article -- date; camp size for his claim the population of Austin was doubled preventing its destruction -- while ignoring the bits obviously in error (confusion with Tonkawa massacre). Simply put, the Walsh article may simply have had a typo, 1842 should have been 18<u>6</u>2, with O'Dell then speculating on events not actually in Walsh's single paragraph about the camp. Walsh was certainly eye witness to a Tonkawa camp, but without corroborating primary evidence the when, what

(e.g. size) and why are unknown.

Finally, worth mentioning. This topic has received a fair amount of sensationalism in the press, nightly news, podcasts and talks that O'Dell has done, etc. Some claims (the Tonkawa saved Austin from certain destruction by raiding Comanches) go way beyond what Walsh's very brief paragraph actually says about the Tonkawa camp. And also what history tells us about the many political moving parts of this time. *Until corroborating evidence is found, speculation beyond what Walsh actually said is just that, speculation.* Walsh's story has enough problems of its own (Section I) without adding to the problem (Section II). Neither the Tonkawa tribe's, Comanche Nation's or Austin's history is served by turning this into a historical fiction, "inspired by true events, but with some incidents and events fictionalized for dramatization purposes."

This article documents what we've learned; here are its major sections:

- I. Problems with 1924 William C. Walsh Article
- II. Problems with O'Dell's Claims on Tonkawa Camp in 1842-1844
- III. Did Walsh Confuse / Conflate 1842 with 1862?
- IV. Tonkawa Oral History
- V. Conclusion
- VI. Links, References, Notes, Sources for this Article

I. Problems with 1924 William C. Walsh Article

The most serious problem begins with the Walsh article itself. The sole source for O'Dell's claims with respect to the camp in 1842 is a ***single paragraph*** from a news article by William C. Walsh (1836-1924) published in 1924, and in particular a ***single sentence*** in that paragraph (we'll look at another article by Mary Smith Mitchell published in 1905 later).

Citing the Handbook of Texas, Capt. William C. Walsh was a Civil War officer (CSA) and Texas land commissioner, born in Dayton, Ohio in 1836. He moved to Austin in 1840 with his father, a blacksmith, and his mother. In 1924, the year he died, he was interviewed for a series of 14 articles on the early days of Austin. In his preface to the series Walsh said upfront "... I shall endeavor to tell the truth and nothing but the truth [about old Austin], but I fear to trust the memory of an old man..." (*The Austin Statesman*, Jan 27, 1924).

In 1924, the year he died, Walsh was 88 years old. If indeed he was remembering events from his childhood in 1842, that was 82 years prior when he was a child of 6. And having arrived in Austin at age 4, did earlier memories of Tonkawa in and around Austin affect his recollections?

Here's the *entirety* of what Walsh said about the Tonkawa camp as published in the newspaper:

Odds and Ends—Indians.

The Tonkaway (sic) Indians were, from the first settlement, friendly to the whites and thereby secured the enmity of the Lipans, Comanches and other inimical tribes. ***In 1842, these Indians made an united attack on the Tonks (sic) and almost entirely wiped them out.*** *A short time afterwards, the remnant, about two hundred and fifty, came to Austin and for mutual protection camped in the city limits. Their camp was situated in a liveoak grove on West Fourth Street, on ground now occupied by what is known as the "Walker Properties." [generally today's Republic Square] The treaty was brief. The Tonks (sic) were to refrain from pilfering, were to act as watchmen and give the alarm if danger approached; were also to join in pursuit of depredators and act as guides. In return, they were privileged to trade meat and pecans and wild fruit for corn, potatoes and other foodstuff. During the next two years of their residence in the city they held faithfully to the above terms.* (*Austin American-Statesman*, 20 Apr 1924, Sun, Page 8)

In the paragraph above Walsh straightaway begins with what O'Dell admits is a "possible" mistake, underlined above: Walsh confuses or conflates the Tonkawa Massacre of 1862[1] with events of 1842. Walsh himself warned about trusting his memory.

From O'Dell's white paper, in reference to this sentence, "It is possible that Walsh was mistakenly thinking about a united attack that happened much later in 1862", i.e. the Tonkawa Massacre of 1862.

Walsh's mixup; three possibilities

Confusing the Tonkawa Massacre of 1862 with 1842 is a *significant* mix-up and a problem for the credibility of the Walsh article in terms of establishing the date of the camp and hence why the Tonkawa were there. Let's see why. We seem to be left with three possibilities:

1. there was no mix-up, something like the 1862 massacre as described by Walsh did take place in 1842, or
2. the date of 1842 is right, but the description of events (which O'Dell himself points out sounds oddly like 1862) is wrong, or
3. the description of events is right (surely the 1862 massacre) but the date is wrong, so 1842 is not right

There really is no way around this ("possible") mix-up; any claims *based* on this mix-up are likewise going to be ("possibly") wrong. As the rest of this article shows, there are a lot of unresolved questions that appear to stem from this mixup.

Let's use "reductio ad absurdum" to move Walsh's sentence above (highlighted) from "possibly" wrong to definitely wrong. At face value, what Walsh presented (#1) is that the Tonkawa experienced an 1862-like event in 1842; so once in 1842, then again in 1862, the latter known as the Tonkawa Massacre of 1862. Which means:

- Given the known impact on the tribe from 1862 alone, two such events would have surely, as Walsh puts it, "wiped them out" .. the fact they were not wiped out suggests two such events did not happen.
- Such an event in 1842 would surely have found it's way into the official Republic of Texas correspondence (see The Indian Papers in references), history books, just as the 1862 event did, and

be part of their oral history, just as 1862 is. Key newspapers like the *Telegraph and Texas Register* reported on matters of 1842 that were far less consequential involving the Tonkawa than an event that Walsh claims "almost entirely wiped" the tribe out; a tribe that as O'Dell points out was an ally to Texas. Indeed some newspapers indicate the Tonkawa contrary to being "almost entirely wiped" were being mustered for an expedition against the Mexican invasion in 1842: "We understand that the whole tribe of Lipans and Tonkewas (sic) have been ordered to move to the vicinity of Corpus Christi, to accompany the army on its march to the Rio Grande" (Colorado Gazette and Advertiser, Matagorda, July 9, 1842)

- And a "united attack" by tribes in 1842 that included the Comanche and their then enemies is not believable.

Possibility #1 just doesn't seem plausible; what Walsh presents in the article about 1842 (#1) is *historically incorrect. Full stop.* But which of our remaining possibilities is right?

Possibility #2 would mean the date is right, and something happened in 1842, but we don't know what.

Possibility #3 would mean Walsh was clearly thinking about the 1862 massacre and just got the date wrong, so what, *if anything*, happened in 1842? We don't know.

Possibilities #2 and #3 combined shed a lot of question on what if *anything* happened in Austin 1842.

I will add, possibility #2 faces the same objection as #1: newspapers like the *Telegraph and Texas Register* reported on matters of 1842 that were of far less consequence to the Tonkawa than a hypothetical event that required the tribe to take refuge inside Austin. Other news from 1842 show the Tonkawa being mustered to Corpus Christi. We will however keep possibility #2 on the table for further exploration.

Simplest explanation: 1842 should have been 1862

The simplest explanation (Occam's razor) is scenario #3, that the date is wrong: 1842 was a slip of the tongue (or memory) or a newspaper typo. A *one digit typo* (18**4**2 should have been 18**6**2) and Walsh's story largely fits, and most of the questions raised go away, i.e. it explains why we see nothing (thus far; more research needed by O'Dell) written about the Tonkawa camped at Republic Square in Austin from *1842 through 1844* (we'll discuss the Mary Mitchell article of 1905 below). If you read the Walsh article carefully, *he never refers to the Mexican Army taking San Antonio, and Austin being evacuated*. The events of 1842 and the evacuation of Austin are never brought up in the article. It is odd that Walsh would mention 1842 -- a defining part of Austin's early history -- then never explain to the reader what the significance was. Further arguing for #3.

Quickly (we'll look at this in more detail below) let's look at what Walsh said, but plug in 1862 rather than 1842:

"*In [1862] these Indians [Comanches and other tribes] made an united attack on the Tonks (sic) and almost entirely wiped them out. A short time afterwards [ca.1863], the remnant, about two hundred and fifty, came to Austin..."*

This fits the documented history of the Tonkawa after the 1862 massacre well. This may also explain an otherwise curious quote from Walsh; the Tonkawa were encamped in Austin for "mutual protection" for two years. Why two years? Consider that 1863 + 2 = 1865. The Civil War ended in 1865 and Austin, a Confederate State, was then surrendered to the Unite States and occupied by Union troops. No more need for "mutual protection". And at this time management of "Indian affairs" passed from the C.S.A. to the United States.

Later we'll explore in more detail the case for a camp in 1862.

Why did the Tonkawa leave in 1844 (or 1843)?

Related to the above, just as a camp from 1863-1865 makes sense of Walsh's camp of two years duration in Republic Square, it's seemingly a problem for a camp from 1842-1844: why would the Tonkawa have left in 1844? Austin was not re-designated the capital until the the Convention of 1845, and annexed by the United States that same year. In 1844 Texans and Austin residents in particular had no way of knowing if Austin would or wouldn't resume as the capital so early residents like Francis Dieterich (1815–1860) who had left in 1842 did not return to Austin until 1845 (*Handbook of Texas*)(*Merchant to the Republic*). So if mutual protection was the reason for the camp, why leave before Austin's fate was known and it was re-populated? If Austinites needed protection the Tonkawa were providing, asking the Tonkawa to leave before Austin's fate was known doesn't seem reasonable.

Further arguing for #3, the camp was ca.1863-1865.

As an update, O'Dell has recently (November 2024) claimed the Tonkawa camp was 1842-1843, not 1844.

William Bollaert's 1843 eye witness account; news reports of the Tonkawa in Bastrop

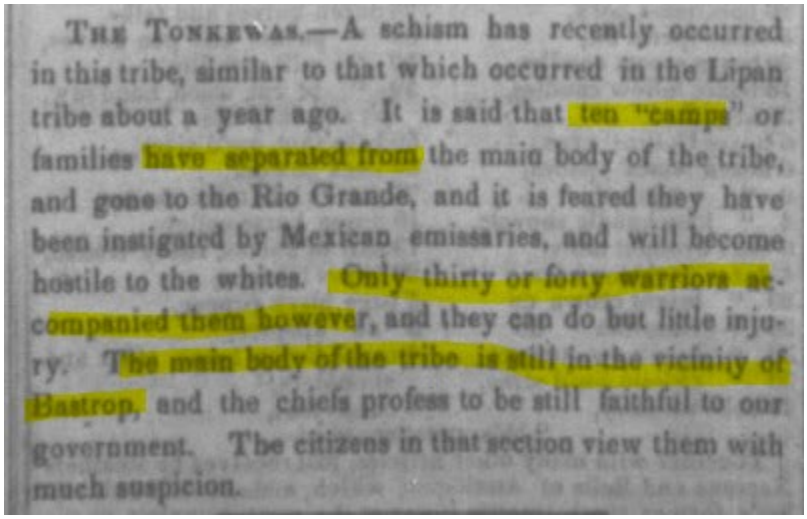
To illustrate this issue of the lack of reports of Tonkawa in Austin 1842-1844 at the Republic Square camp, William Bollaert, an English explorer, writer, chemist, geographer, and ethnologist traveled through Texas in 1842 to 1843. He is known for his journal and copious notes; he is a primary source and eye witness to Austin during this period.

He is in both Bastrop and Austin in August 1843 on consecutive days. Passing through Bastrop enroute to Austin he meets with Chief Campo, sees families camped, goes to a store "full" of Tonkawa trading. The next day he's in Austin for 2 nights, nearly 3 days (leaves the evening of the 3rd day) .. *records nothing about seeing Tonkawa*. None camping. None trading with residents. (more below: William Bollaert's Notes on Tonkawa 1843). The almost total focus on documenting the Tonkawa in Bastrop compared with the *complete lack of reference to any* Tonkawa in Austin by Bollaert begs the question of whether they were there in Austin in 1843.

That they were somewhere other than Austin, notably Bastrop, during this period is backed by historians like Himmel: "By 1838 [the Tonkawa] had located their main campsite on the east side of the Colorado River,

below Alum Creek, on lands claimed by General Edward Burleson. The association between the Tonkawas, led by Placido and Campos (sic), and General Burleson would sustain the Tonkawas through the turbulent years of the republic.." (Himmel, p.82). Alum Creek is about 5 miles east of Bastrop, its mouth on the Colorado River about 7 miles southeast of town. That location jives nicely with Bollaert having visited Campo then into downtown Bastrop later that day.

Bastrop as main camp also jives with news accounts from 1843 when a split happened in the tribe, one group heading to the Rio Grande and possibly into Mexico, but "The main body of the [Tonkawa] tribe is still in the vicinity of Bastrop..." (*The Morning Star.* (Houston, Tex.) May 6, 1843).



THE TONKEWAS.—A schism has recently occurred in this tribe, similar to that which occurred in the Lipan tribe about a year ago. It is said that ten "camps" or families have separated from the main body of the tribe, and gone to the Rio Grande, and it is feared they have been instigated by Mexican emissaries, and will become hostile to the whites. Only thirty or forty warriors accompanied them however, and they can do but little injury. The main body of the tribe is still in the vicinity of Bastrop, and the chiefs profess to be still faithful to our government. The citizens in that section view them with much suspicion.

1843 news article: "The main body of the tribe is still in the vicinity of Bastrop..."

Constructing population counts from news articles is hard, but this 1843 article provides a way to "guesstimate" upper and lower bounds on how many may have been camped in Bastrop before the split.

Simply as an example, if 2/3 is the majority that remained (just keeping the math simple) and 1/3 left, that would have been 30 camps or families before the split, or 90-120 "warriors". If each warrior had X number of family members .. you get the idea .. a pretty good size camp for the time.

But the point really is, *if the main body of Tonkawa are in Bastrop, they aren't in Austin. Given estimates of population size, it's not reasonable to have a main camp in Bastrop, another group on the Rio Grande, and yet another 250 camped in Austin.*

This also jives with other eye witness accounts of Austin and Bastrop in 1842 (Latham, Francis. *Travels in the Republic of Texas, 1842*)

Walsh's mixup in summary: we don't know what happened when, but ...

To conclude, *from the Walsh article we don't know what happened when*. Without more primary evidence

claims based on that article are suspect.

But, the 1924 Walsh article aside, if one simply spends time searching through newspaper accounts from 1842 through 1844 (primary sources, and keeping in mind the various spellings like "Tonkewas" and "Tonkaways") *the Tonkawa seem to be nearly everywhere but Austin*, and in particular as noted above, Bastrop.

To overcome what certainly does appear to be a mix-up and defend O'Dell's 1842 claims would require corroborating primary evidence, or at least evidence from someone connected with someone known to have been there (Austin in 1842-1844) like Mary Mitchell (extended family of Robertson who was there; more on her 1905 article below). That level of evidence has not yet been presented by O'Dell, nor have I found it.

In the next section we'll look at possibility #2 from above. After that we'll look at possibility #3 as to what Walsh's article was talking about; the period after the 1862 Tonkawa massacre ca. 1863 during the Civil War when the Tonkawa are known to have returned to Austin.

II. Problems with O'Dell's Claims on Tonkawa Camp in 1842-1844

In this section we look at possibility #2 above: the date of 1842-1844 is right, although O'Dell admits Walsh confused what happened with events that actually happened in 1862. O'Dell also makes a number of unsubstantiated claims. We'll explore these here. Although O'Dell has made revisions based on TCHC feedback to his original white paper on file with the Austin History Center, news stories, podcasts, ceremonies etc. were made public based on 1.0 so need to be addressed.

It's important to reemphasize: the Walsh article contains a single paragraph of 163 words. In what follows below, if it's not in the original paragraph, it was added by O'Dell and or newspaper accounts based on his interview.

1842 in Austin

Let’s back up and look at what was happening in 1842 in Austin; later we'll also look at Austin post-1862 during the Civil War as it relates to the Tonkawa.

From the Handbook of Texas: “In the years following the battle of San Jacinto, Mexican leaders periodically threatened to renew hostilities against Texas. Lacking the resources to attempt reconquest, the Centralist government of Antonio López de Santa Anna, who had returned to the presidency in the fall of 1841, ordered the army to harass the Texas frontier; his policy was intended to discourage immigration and foreign capital investment in the young republic. Accordingly, a force of 700 men under Gen. Rafael Vásquez marched into Texas and seized San Antonio on March 5, 1842. Forewarned of the Mexican advance, most Anglo-American residents had already evacuated the area allowing Vasquez to enter the town unopposed.” It was during this period that much of Austin’s population left; it was during this period the infamous

“Archives War” took place.

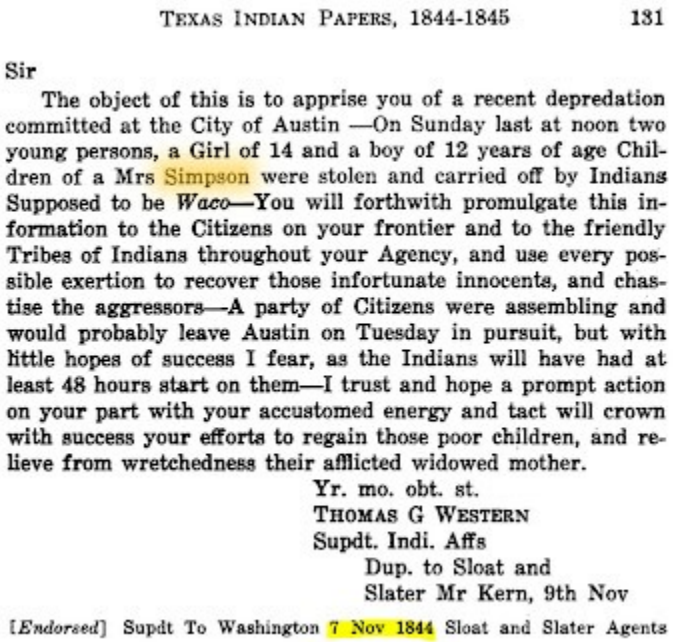
To paraphrase O’Dell’s interview published May 2024 in the *American Statesman*: *in 1842 while Austin was largely evacuated, the Comanches kidnapped two children, William and Jane Simpson, who lived on West Pecan today's W 6th St. O’Dell claimed in his white paper and interview the kidnapping was a “triggering event” for Austinites to invite the Tonkawa into the city to protect against further raids. He then claimed that in the period they were camped at Republic Square in Austin all raids stopped, and their presence prevented Austin from being destroyed by the Comanche, i.e. the Tonkawa “saved Austin”, or as expressed in a pod-cast,“How the Tonkawa Tribe Saved Austin's Capital Status”.*

There are a number of historical problems with this. But again, the white paper filing with AHC, news paper interviews, podcasts, contact with the mayor and county officials, etc. all happened before O’Dell scheduled a meeting with TCHC otherwise TCHC et.al. might have caught some of this earlier.

Simpson Children Abduction: 1844, not 1842

First, although O’Dell cited *The Indian Papers of Texas and the Southwest 1825-1916* he failed to notice that the Simpson kids were kidnapped in 1844, not 1842, after the Tonkawa had left. This is abundantly documented in Republic of Texas correspondence on the matter, as well as various newspapers across Texas that reported on it. So, abduction of the Simpson children was not a “triggering event” for Austin inviting the Tonkawa to Austin as O'Dell suggested.

Beyond correcting this error (O'Dell filed a correction to his white paper with the AHC) this is an example of O'Dell's speculations on events which aren't even part of the Walsh article.



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Sir

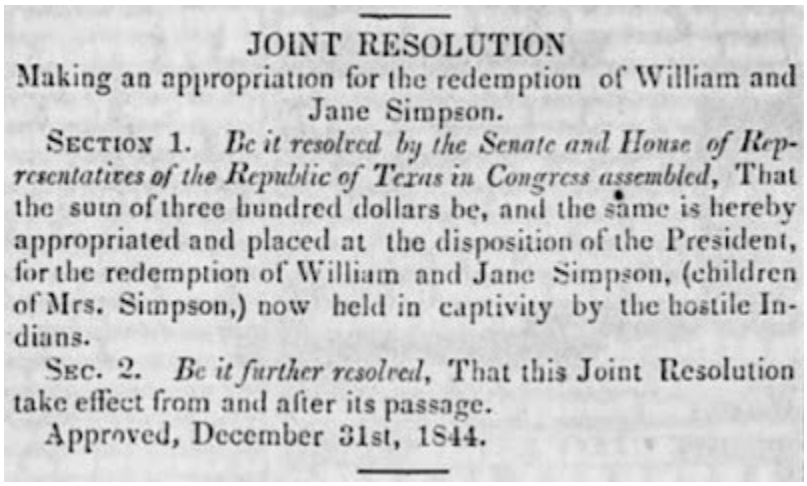
The object of this is to apprise you of a recent depredation committed at the City of Austin —On Sunday last at noon two young persons, a Girl of 14 and a boy of 12 years of age Children of a Mrs Simpson were stolen and carried off by Indians Supposed to be *Waco*—You will forthwith promulgate this information to the Citizens on your frontier and to the friendly Tribes of Indians throughout your Agency, and use every possible exertion to recover those infortunate innocents, and chastise the aggressors—A party of Citizens were assembling and would probably leave Austin on Tuesday in pursuit, but with little hopes of success I fear, as the Indians will have had at least 48 hours start on them—I trust and hope a prompt action on your part with your accustomed energy and tact will crown with success your efforts to regain those poor children, and relieve from wretchedness their afflicted widowed mother.

Yr. mo. obt. st.
THOMAS G WESTERN
Supdt. Indi. Affs

Dup. to Sloat and
Slater Mr Kern, 9th Nov

[*Endorsed*] Supdt To Washington 7 Nov 1844 Sloat and Slater Agents

Republic of Texas correspondence on the abduction of the Simpson children in 1844



JOINT RESOLUTION

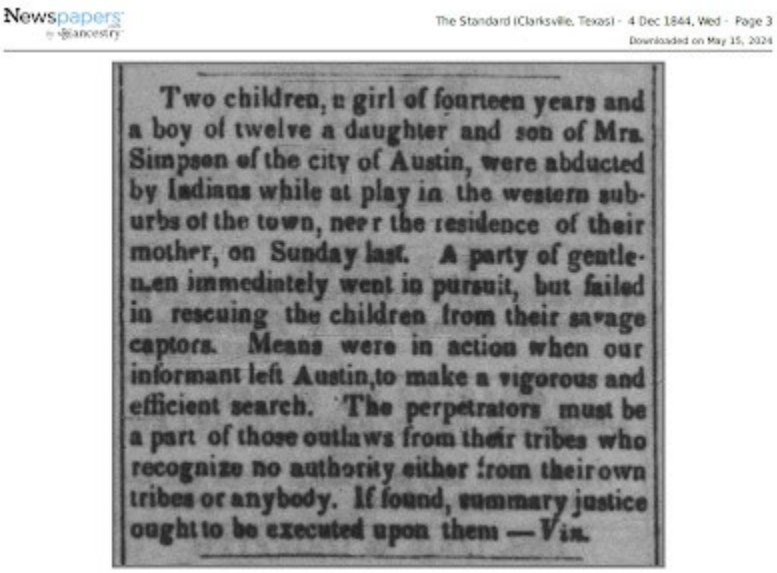
Making an appropriation for the redemption of William and Jane Simpson.

SECTION 1. *Be it resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Republic of Texas in Congress assembled*, That the sum of three hundred dollars be, and the same is hereby appropriated and placed at the disposition of the President, for the redemption of William and Jane Simpson, (children of Mrs. Simpson,) now held in captivity by the hostile Indians.

SEC. 2. *Be it further resolved*, That this Joint Resolution take effect from and after its passage.

Approved, December 31st, 1844.

Congressional resolution for ransom of Simpson children, 1844



Newspapers by Ancestry

Downloaded on May 15, 2024

Two children, a girl of fourteen years and a boy of twelve a daughter and son of Mrs. Simpson of the city of Austin, were abducted by Indians while at play in the western suburbs of the town, near the residence of their mother, on Sunday last. A party of gentlemen immediately went in pursuit, but failed in rescuing the children from their savage captors. Means were in action when our informant left Austin, to make a vigorous and efficient search. The perpetrators must be a part of those outlaws from their tribes who recognize no authority either from their own tribes or anybody. If found, summary justice ought to be executed upon them — *Vin.*

The Standard (Clarksville, Texas) 4 Dec 1844, Wed

Further documentation in the *Indian Papers* shows the children were abducted by Comanches, but that it caused a rift with bands that were at this time trying to pursue peace with Texas. Michno *(Fate Worse than Death*) summarizes the story (p.82) “Apparently a significant number of Comanches [under Chief Cut Arm] were trying to remain at peace with Texans. They knew who [Comanches under Chief Mopechucope] had led the raid on the Simpsons”; those responsible were confronted resulting a fight in which Cut Arm was killed, along with the son and father responsible for the abduction. So in a rare case, the specific individuals, a father and son, were actually identified. A report is available in *The Indian Papers of Texas and the Southwest 1825-1916: Volume 2* pp. 283-84 & 298-99. I think this -- some Comanches were pursuing peace -- may help explain why they did not burn Austin, or San Antonio for that matter, to the ground ca. 1842. More on that below.

No Evidence of an "Invite"

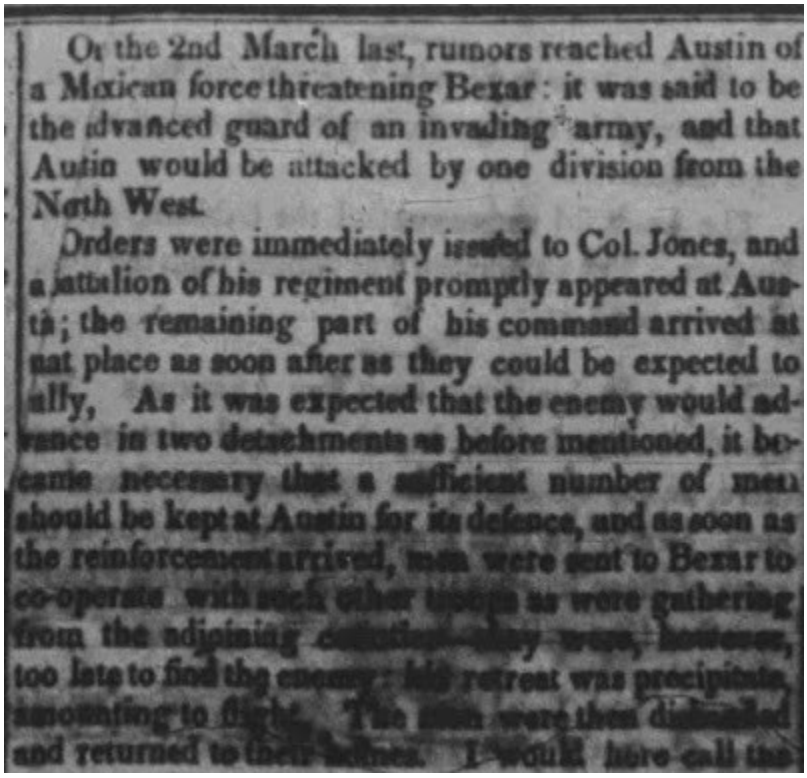
What about O'Dell's claim the City of Austin *invited* the Tonkawa? He concedes (private communications) there is no evidence of an invitation. Walsh makes no mention of an invite. Some of Walsh's derogatory language about "pilfering" suggests this was not just an omission, rather he never meant to imply an invite was extended (you do not generally extend an invite to someone then ask them to refrain from pilfering). One would think something as important as this would have been reported somewhere, notably correspondence of the Republic of Texas as documented in *The Indian Papers.* I've found no evidence of an invite thus far.

Another incident brings into question this notion of an "invite" in 1842 to "save" Austin. In 1842, the Tonkawa allies refused to accompany Burleson on an expedition after the murder of a Tonkawa man by an Anglo Texan in Bastrop. In response Burleson "threatened to evict the Tonkawas from the Colorado River" if they did not support the expedition. First, yet another reference to the Tonkawa being located in Bastrop (see sections on Bollaert in this article), but why threaten to evict the Tonkawa from the Colorado River if indeed they were seen as needed to "save" Austin? (Himmel, p.87)(*Houston Telegraph and Texas Register*, September 7, 1842).

Texas Army ("a force of sufficient strength to defend Austin")

Another fact that brings to question an invite by Austin. March 5th, 1842 the Mexican Army under Gen. Rafael Vásquez marched into Texas and seized San Antonio. Within days Texas Secretary of War, George W. Hockley, ordered a battalion of Col. Henry Jones' regiment to Austin. That, with the men already in Austin, were thought to "...constitute a force of sufficient strength to defend Austin..." (*ATTACK AND COUNTERATTACK: The Texas-Mexican Frontier, 1842*. Nance, pp.55-56. Retrieved from Texas State Historical Association 10/4/2024).

Mexican General Woll then invaded San Antonio in September. While still not clear how much of or when the Texas Army was withdrawn from Austin (more research needed), if present through September (Woll retreated after the Battle of Salado Creek) that is a large part of 1842 where an "invite" to the Tonkawa to protect Austin makes little sense.



On the 2nd March last, rumors reached Austin of a Mexican force threatening Bexar: it was said to be the advanced guard of an invading army, and that Austin would be attacked by one division from the North West.

Orders were immediately issued to Col. Jones, and a battalion of his regiment promptly appeared at Austin; the remaining part of his command arrived at that place as soon after as they could be expected to rally. As it was expected that the enemy would advance in two detachments as before mentioned, it became necessary that a sufficient number of men should be kept at Austin for its defence, and as soon as the reinforcement arrived, men were sent to Bexar to co-operate with such other troops as were gathering from the adjoining [illegible] they were, however, too late to find the enemy: his retreat was precipitate, amounting to flight. The men were then dismissed and returned to their homes. I would here call the

A battalion of Col. Jones' regiment ordered to Austin in March of 1842 for protection of Austin, the capital. *The Standard (Clarksville, Texas)*, Sat, Sep 3, 1842.

Deaths of Dolson and Black, killed at Barton Springs; where are the Tonkawa?

Walsh describes the deaths of Captains Dolson and Black. While his details surrounding their death differs a bit from one newspaper obit, their date of death can be confirmed with their burial at Oakwood Cemetery, as well as probate records for Dolson on file with the Travis County Clerk's office, Austin.

Their date of death was August 1st, 1842.

As an aside and for clarification, at the time of his death Dolson was presumably no longer a captain; in 1841 he and a Mr. King filed deeds for a saloon (Travis County Deed Records: Deed Record A Page: 398). https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth1595810/m1/442/ George M. Dolson appears in a number of interesting write ups like "Did David Crockett Surrender at the Alamo?" (Connelly, *The Journal of Southern History*, 1960. Has a short bio on Dolson; he was not active military when he died)

Back to the main story ..

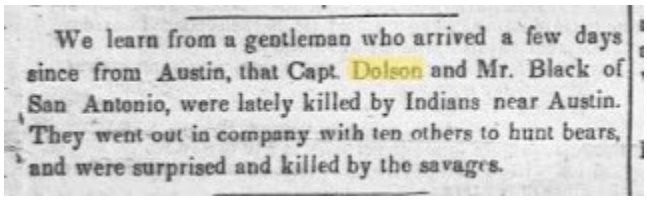
In other reports of their death, and indeed as reported by Walsh himself, there is no mention of Tonkawa involvement: no raising alarm or tracking the "depredators". As in the next section on the 1843 raid on Austin, this brings up questions as to whether the Tonkawa were at the time encamped, in this case quite

close to Barton Springs.

O'Dell has explained this lack of reference (private communications) by saying their deaths were not within the city limits. While I find that explanation lacking, the same could then be said of his speculation (private communications and a later version of his white paper) that had the Tonkawa been present in Austin in 1844 perhaps the Simpson kids would have been saved (this was after he learned they weren't abducted in 1842); the kids were in Shoal Creek which is west of West Avenue, beyond the city limits of the time.

There are certain locations that even in 1842, while technically not within the city limits, would have been considered "Austin": Mount Bonnell, Shoal Creek, Treaty Oak (all west of West Ave.), and Barton Springs being in this category.

Regardless, if as O'Dell says, the Tonkawa were camped "strategically ... at the mouth of Shoal Creek, near where Dolson and Black were scalped ...", one might expect *some* mention (not just by Walsh, but *any* of the chroniclers of this story) if only to say "the Tonkawa wanted to track the depredators but were discouraged as it was outside the city limits". I find the complete lack of reference to the Tonkawa raises questions that I'll explore more in other sections: were the Tonkawa actually encamped at that time.


We learn from a gentleman who arrived a few days since from Austin, that Capt. Dolson and Mr. Black of San Antonio, were lately killed by Indians near Austin. They went out in company with ten others to hunt bears, and were surprised and killed by the savages.

Obit from newspaper for Dolson and Black. Details differ a bit from what Walsh describes, i.e. they had gone swimming at Barton Springs. Obit pulled from https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/63887231/george-m-dolson

1843 raid on Austin

Concerning O'Dell's claim there were no raids on Austin while the Tonkawa were encamped; he is ignoring the sizable raid of 1843 (number in the party range as high as 40), probably by Comanches, and documented in several books (Wilbarger's *Depredations*; John Holland Jenkins, *Recollections of Early Texas*, p.166; Andrew J. Sowell, *Rangers and Pioneers of Texas*, pp.58-59; Frank Brown, *Annals*, X p.46, 49) and by early Austin resident and historian Julia Lee Sinks (Quarterly, Texas State Historical Association, 1900). We even have an eye witness account by James Smith and son John (their homestead is today's Boggy Creek Farm; second oldest homestead in Austin, thought built same year as French Legation).

John Smith documented the raid in a letter (Briscoe Center for American History, John Scott and Justina Rowzee Pickle Family Papers, 1834-1960. https://txarchives.org/utcah/finding_aids/04466.xml). By accounts (which do vary on details and I suspect Julia Lee Sinks was trying to piece it all together in her paper for

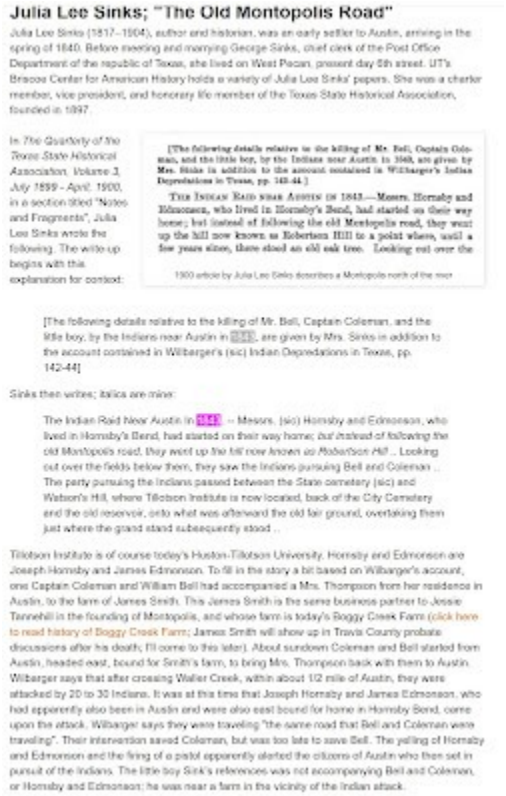
TSHA) the raid came from the east, passing Robertson Hill in Austin's out lots, then north along Waller Creek through the eastern part of Austin, then escaping into the "mountains" (a reference to the hills west of Austin) after a skirmish with Austin residents.

Residents of Austin were killed in the raid. Brown comments that when Bell and Coleman were assaulted, a Mrs. Browning and daughter, standing in their door near Waller Creek on East Avenue were within two hundred yards of the raiding party.

None of the half dozen accounts above mention Tonkawa involvement: raising alarm, help in pursuit, or engaging the raiding party which happened toward dusk with some three(?) of the raiding party killed.

More on this below as we revisit the raid of 1843.

Link to Brown's account on the Portal:
https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth841238/m1/162/



Julia Lee Sinks; "The Old Montopolis Road"

Julia Lee Sinks (1817–1904), author and historian, was an early settler to Austin, arriving in the spring of 1840. Before meeting and marrying George Sinks, chief clerk of the Post Office Department of the republic of Texas, she lived on West Pecan, present day 6th street. UT's Briscoe Center for American History holds a variety of Julia Lee Sinks' papers. She was a charter member, vice president, and honorary life member of the Texas State Historical Association, founded in 1897.

In *The Quarterly of the Texas State Historical Association, Volume 3, July 1899 - April, 1900*, in a section titled "Notes and Fragments", Julia Lee Sinks wrote the following. The write up begins with this explanation for context:

> [The following details relative to the killing of Mr. Bell, Captain Coleman, and the little boy, by the Indians near Austin in 1843, are given by Mrs. Sinks in addition to the account contained in Wilbarger's Indian Depredations in Texas, pp. 142-44.]
>
> THE INDIAN RAID NEAR AUSTIN IN 1843.—Messrs. Hornsby and Edmonson, who lived in Hornsby's Bend, had started on their way home; but instead of following the old Montopolis road, they went up the hill now known as Robertson Hill to a point where, until a few years since, there stood an old oak tree. Looking out over the

1900 article by Julia Lee Sinks describes a Montopolis north of the river

> [The following details relative to the killing of Mr. Bell, Captain Coleman, and the little boy, by the Indians near Austin in [redacted], are given by Mrs. Sinks in addition to the account contained in Wilbarger's (sic) Indian Depredations in Texas, pp. 142-44]

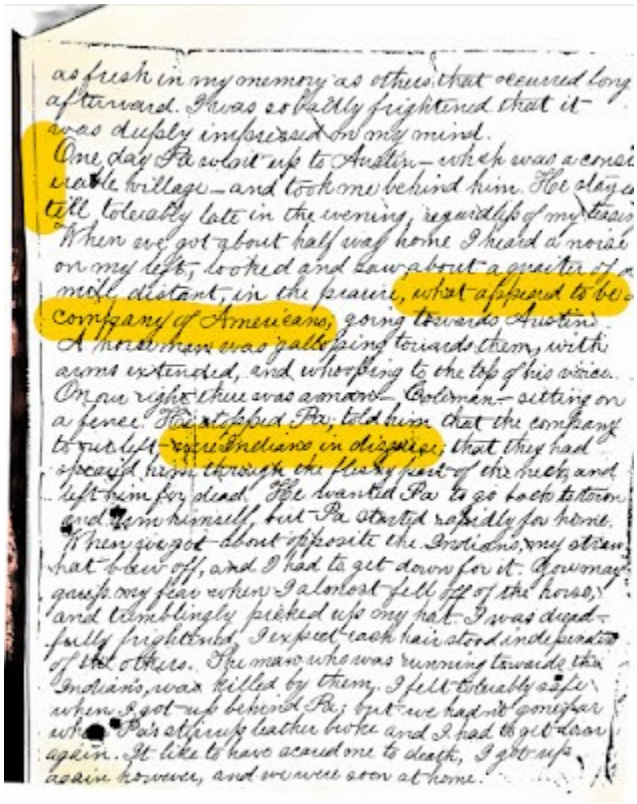
Sinks then writes; italics are mine:

> The Indian Raid Near Austin In [redacted] – Messrs. (sic) Hornsby and Edmonson, who lived in Hornsby's Bend, had started on their way home; *but instead of following the old Montopolis road, they went up the hill now known as Robertson Hill* ... Looking out over the fields below them, they saw the Indians pursuing Bell and Coleman ... The party pursuing the Indians passed between the State cemetery (sic) and Watson's Hill, where Tillotson Institute is now located, back of the City Cemetery and the old reservoir, onto what was afterward the old fair ground, overtaking them just where the grand stand subsequently stood ...

Tillotson Institute is of course today's Huston-Tillotson University. Hornsby and Edmonson are Joseph Hornsby and James Edmonson. To fill in the story a bit based on Wilbarger's account, one Captain Coleman and William Bell had accompanied a Mrs. Thompson from her residence in Austin, to the farm of James Smith. This James Smith is the same business partner to Jessie Tannehill in the founding of Montopolis, and whose farm is today's Boggy Creek Farm (click here to read history of Boggy Creek Farm; James Smith will show up in Travis County probate discussions after his death; I'll come to this later). About sundown Coleman and Bell started from Austin, headed east, bound for Smith's farm, to bring Mrs. Thompson back with them to Austin. Wilbarger says that after crossing Waller Creek, within about 1/2 mile of Austin, they were attacked by 20 to 30 Indians. It was at this time that Joseph Hornsby and James Edmonson, who had apparently also been in Austin and were also east bound for home in Hornsby Bend, came upon the attack. Wilbarger says they were traveling "the same road that Bell and Coleman were traveling". Their intervention saved Coleman, but was too late to save Bell. The yelling of Hornsby and Edmonson and the firing of a pistol apparently alerted the citizens of Austin who then set in pursuit of the Indians. The little boy Sink's references was not accompanying Bell and Coleman, or Hornsby and Edmonson; he was near a farm in the vicinity of the Indian attack.

Click to enlarge. A compilation of a few sources on the 1843 raid on Austin. Details of the handwritten note by John Smith suggest the raiding party was Comanche, and perhaps even some that had been involved in the events of 1840 (they

wore "American" clothing maybe from Linnville). If indeed Comanche, the raid may well have been on-going retribution for the Council House Massacre of 1840. The raiding party appears to have approached from the east, headed west. Keep in mind, the old entry to Austin was from the east via Bastrop, Webberville and Hornsby Bend; old Fort Colorado was on this eastern entry to what would later be Austin and was the location of many Texas and Comanche skirmishes, but also a treaty for peace by the Comanche in 1837.



as fresh in my one memory as others that occurred long afterward. I was so badly frightened that it was deeply impressed on my mind.
One day Pa went up to Austin — which was a considerable village — and took me behind him. We stayed till tolerably late in the evening, regardless of my tears. When we got about half way home I heard a noise on my left, looked and saw about a quarter of a mile distant, in the prairie, what appeared to be a company of Americans, going towards Austin. A horseman was galloping towards them, with arms extended, and whooping to the top of his voice. On our right there was a man — Coleman — sitting on a fence. He stopped Pa, told him that the company to our left were Indians in disguise, that they had speared him through the flesh part of the back, and left him for dead. He wanted Pa to go back to town and arm himself, but Pa started rapidly for home. When we got about opposite the Indians, my steer shat been off, and I had to get down for it. You may guess my fear when I alone left off of the horse, and tremblingly picked up my hat. I was dreadfully frightened. I expect each hair stood on end for fear of the others. The man who was running towards the Indians, was killed by them. I felt tolerably safe when I got up behind Pa; but we had not gone far when Pa's stirrup leather broke and I had to get down again. It like to have scared me to death. I got up again however, and we were soon at home.

Page from John Smith letter

Key locations based on accounts of the 1843 raid on Austin including eye witness description of James Smith and son John, described by John in a letter on file with Briscoe.

William Bollaert's notes on Tonkawa 1843 revisited

Some of the points here have already been touched on above (**William Bollaert's 1843 eye witness account; news reports of the Tonkawa in Bastrop**). But given O'Dell is specifically claiming that Walsh meant 1842-1844, this topic needs to be revisited, especially as it is primary / eye-witness accounts of the Tonkawa being in Bastrop, not Austin.

William Bollaert, writer, chemist, geographer, and ethnologist traveled through Texas in 1842 to 1843. His detailed journals (posthumously compiled into a book in 1956) provide a primary source of information on Texas during its early days as a republic; his journal includes notes on Tonkawa, including one on one meetings. (*William Bollaert's Texas*, paperback printing 1989)

In August through September of 1843 he traveled from Houston to Austin and back.

August 22nd just outside Bastrop Bollaert spends time with a young Tonkawa man, "Mr. M", then later with Tonkawa Chief Campo, encamped there with "four or five" families. Campo reported having just recently returned from buffalo hunting, and that later that summer planned to "visit the coast .. to see the ocean and hunt mustangs and deer". That same day Bollaert then went into Bastrop where there was a dry goods store "full of Tonkeways (sic)" bartering for goods including "beads, and such finery" for their wives, and even whiskey from the "tippling shop".

He arrived in Austin August 23rd, spent all of August 24th and most of August 25th, leaving that evening for Webber's Prairie where he spent the night. His brief stay in Austin may have (he does not elaborate) been in part due to health (he became ill the 26th) but also perhaps the poor shape Austin was in, which residents blamed on Sam Houston.

By far, documenting the Tonkawa in Bastrop was Bollaert's main focus.

Of all the observations he made on Austin -- he mentions visiting the French Legation, the Capitol, the President's house, residences, some businesses -- there is no mention of having seen *any* Tonkawa camped anywhere (Republic Square being just .2 miles off Congress Ave) or trading with residents. Maybe all the men were out hunting? That still leaves the women and children, say 2/3 of the tribe, that would presumably still be in Austin tending camp? In a depopulated Austin surely a camp of Tonkawa of significant size just off Congress Ave. would have been noticed.

These two reports a day apart seem to paint a different picture of the Tonkawa in 1843 than that of Walsh's article (per possibility #2), and O'Dell's claims, of a tribe of some 250 in a weakened state huddled in Austin's city limits for protection.

The fact that Campo, in Bastrop, had just returned from buffalo hunting, and was then planning a visit to the coast to see the ocean, almost like a vacation!, with other members of the tribe bartering for "finery" and whiskey ... It's almost like Walsh confused Austin for Bastrop. I'm not suggesting that is so, just that Bollaert's description of the Tonkawa in Bastrop vs. Austin (no mention) is not what one might infer from Walsh's article (per possibility #2) and O'Dell's claims.

The description of the Tonkawa in Bastrop does raise a question.

Per Walsh, we have some 250 Tonkawa 2/3 of which were probably women and children, by Walsh's account not in great shape, needing refuge. With Austin largely depopulated and itself in weakened condition, why would anyone go to Austin for safety if indeed you suspected that it was the bullseye for an attack by the Comanche? The residents of Austin that stayed did so because their lives were rooted in homesteads and businesses (as Bollaert commented on). The Tonkawa were mobile and could have gone anywhere .. *like Bastrop* .. where some like Campo himself were camped.

I'll reemphasize, Bollaert's description of the Tonkawa in Bastrop in 1843 seems to show a tribe that is still mobile and not afraid to move about. Bollaert is a primary source, eye witness account to Austin in 1843, from a man known to document details.

The almost total focus on documenting the Tonkawa in Bastrop compared with the *complete lack of reference to any* Tonkawa in Austin by Bollaert begs the question of whether they were there in Austin in 1843.

"Saving Austin". Why Austin was not destroyed

First I'll reemphasize: the Mexican invasion of San Antonio in 1842 and the evacuation of Austin are *never* brought up in Walsh's article. That was added by O'Dell and subsequent *American-Statesman* articles that followed.

O'Dell's claims that if not for the Tonkawa encampment, Austin would have been destroyed by the Comanche, or nearly so as to rule it out as the future Capital of Texas; see *"How the Tonkawa Tribe Saved Austin's Capital Status"*. Their presence saved Austin. Again no evidence of this, and there are other plausible explanations.

On the face of it, it's hard to reconcile that the Comanche and their allies, who thwarted Texas westward expansion for another *three plus decades*, would have been dissuaded from burning Austin to the ground as they had done with Linnville just years before by a force of some 250 Tonkawa, 2/3 of which were likely women and children. Despite the number of chiefs killed in the Council House Massacre in 1840, the Penateka (much less the other Comanche divisions) still had powerful chiefs remaining: Buffalo Hump, Yellow Wolf, and Santa Anna (no not that one!) to name a few.

I would also point out that San Antonio wasn't leveled either even while under the command of the Mexican army who might well have helped. San Antonio was, after all, the location of the Council House Massacre of 1840.

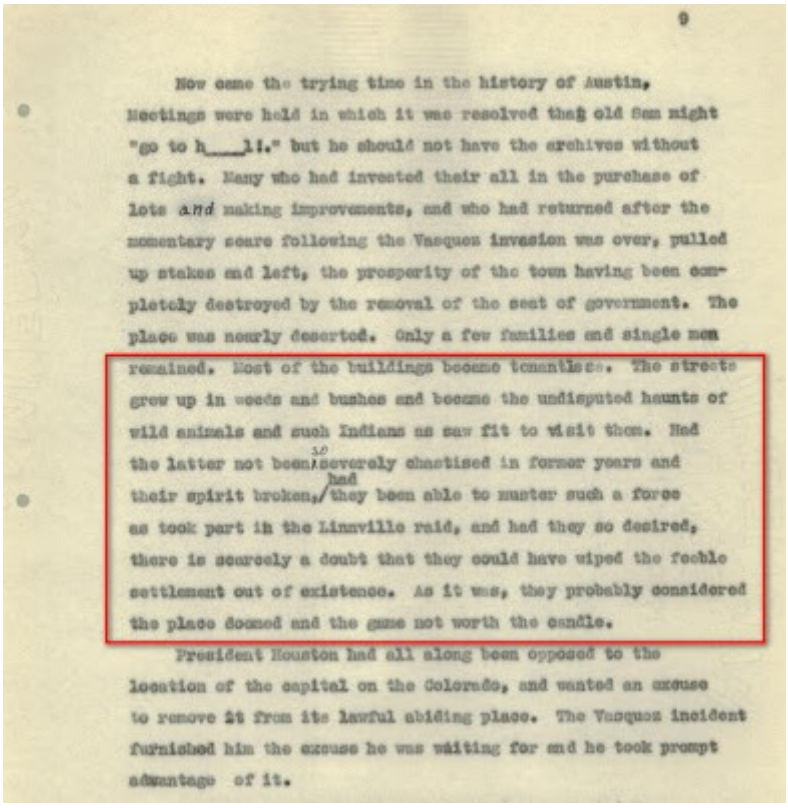
With Houston back as Texas' president, and given the events of 1840 (Council House Massacre, Raid on Linnville, Plum Creek Battle, and Moore's raid into Comancheria), many of the Penateka were ready for peace. This is a documented fact. The Comanche had already approached Fort Colorado in 1837 asking for a treaty of peace (Smithwick).

Frank Brown also weighed in on this question speculating "... they [the Comanche] probably considered the place [Austin] doomed and the game not worth the candle." (*Annals of Travis County and of the City of Austin Volume 4, p.9 or p.57 on the portal).* In other words, Texas itself (Houston et.al.) was doing a pretty good job of trying to shut Austin down; it wasn't worth risking additional casualties and any potential peace treaties with Houston that might be in the near future. Work smarter, not harder. Let Houston -- or the Mexican army -- finish it off.

This is ultimately a question best addressed by historians of the Pekka Hämäläinen caliber, and indeed may likely never be answered.

Even *if* the Comanche had burned Austin to the ground, O'Dell is making a forgone conclusion (*"How the Tonkawa Tribe Saved Austin's Capital Status")* that the destruction would have prevented Austin from continuing as the capital; that is a claim that would be hard to substantiate. The Archives War is a simple example of the desire of Austin residents (and other anti-Houston Texans) to remain the capital. There were lots of political moving parts during this period.

https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth841238/m1/57/



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Now came the trying time in the history of Austin. Meetings were held in which it was resolved that old Sam might "go to h___ll." but he should not have the archives without a fight. Many who had invested their all in the purchase of lots and making improvements, and who had returned after the momentary scare following the Vasquez invasion was over, pulled up stakes and left, the prosperity of the town having been completely destroyed by the removal of the seat of government. The place was nearly deserted. Only a few families and single men remained. Most of the buildings became tenantless. The streets grew up in weeds and bushes and became the undisputed haunts of wild animals and such Indians as saw fit to visit them. Had the latter not been severely chastised in former years and their spirit broken, they had been able to muster such a force as took part in the Linnville raid, and had they so desired, there is scarcely a doubt that they could have wiped the feeble settlement out of existence. As it was, they probably considered the place doomed and the game not worth the candle.

President Houston had all along been opposed to the location of the capital on the Colorado, and wanted an excuse to remove it from its lawful abiding place. The Vasquez incident furnished him the excuse he was waiting for and he took prompt advantage of it.

Frank Brown, *Annals of Travis County and of the City of Austin,* speculation as to why the Comanche didn't destroy Austin in 1842. While he doesn't mention the Comanche by name, his reference to Linnville clues us in.

III. Did Walsh Confuse / Conflate 1842 with 1862?

Some of what is here in Section III is revisiting points from previous sections but worth a second look as we add additional context.

We've already discussed that Walsh confused events from 1862 with 1842; a confusion O'Dell acknowledges. Confusing the Tonkawa Massacre of 1862 with 1842 is a significant mix-up. This brings up a question: did the Tonkawa camp at Republic Square actually take place in 1842, or was it perhaps before or after the 1842 evacuation, or both, i.e. Walsh conflating an earlier camp with later events post-1862 when some Tonkawa did return to Austin.

An even simpler explanation: 1842 was a slip of the tongue or a newspaper typo: a *one digit typo* (18**4**2 should have been 18**6**2) and Walsh's story largely fits, and most of the questions raised go away, i.e. Walsh was talking about a camp in Austin ca.1863-1865 during the Civil War; we know with certainty there were Tonkawa in Austin as late as 1867 at which time they were relocated from Austin north to Jacksboro, then on to Fort Griffin that same year.

Let's run through some more questions about a Tonkawa camp date of 1842-1844, but then conclude with a look at what was going on with the Tonkawa and Austin post-1862 during the Civil War.

1843 Raid on Austin revisited; where were the Tonkawa?

As noted above, the 1843 raid on Austin was recorded in a number of sources (I'll make what I think is the reasonable assumption they were Comanche). And as noted there is no reference to Tonkawa involvement in the half dozen sources referenced above. The fact that all these sources are silent on Tonkawa involvement is puzzling. For example, ritualistic cannibalism around the death of enemies in combat was discussed (sensationalized) by so many chroniclers of the 1800s and early 1900s, and a topic of academic research (anthropologists and historians). The fact that Comanches were killed begs the question, why is there no mention of Tonkawa ceremony surrounding these deaths by *any* of the sources documenting the 1843 raid on Austin? If Tonkawa were indeed encamped in Austin in 1843, they would by accounts had time to reach the location (as did some Austin residents) where the battle culminated and where some Comanche were killed? There is the possibility that the Comanche retrieved the bodies of their dead comrades as they were known to do in battle, but in such a case there would surely have been mention of Tonkawa pursuit, again as they were known to have done in previous battles; retrieving fallen comrades takes time increasing the chance a pursuing band of Tonkawa could have pursued and even engaged the raiding party. The complete absence of reference to Tonkawa involvement would seem to suggest that in 1843

- a) they were not in Austin, or
- b) were in such a weakened condition they opted to not be involved, in which case their presence was not a reason why Austin was not burned to the ground (above discussion), or
- c) of the half dozen sources cited that described the raid none thought it worth mentioning.

The latter is hard to believe based on the chroniclers of this period which found the topic of such interest. So I think a) or b) is what we are left with.

Dr. Joseph W. Robertson and the Mary Mitchell Article of 1905

Joseph William Robertson, namesake of Robertson Hill and previous owner of the French Legation, was fifth mayor of Austin in 1843; part of the period in question. In 1839–40 he represented Bastrop County in the House of Representatives of the Fourth Congress of the Republic of Texas. At the end of his term Robertson moved to Austin (Handbook of Texas). He was also apparently the physician attached to the battalion of Col. Henry Jones' regiment in Austin in 1842.

Robertson's son-in-law, Robert A. Smith, was the brother of Mary Smith Mitchell. Far from being a random reporter, she was part of the Robertson extended family and in 1905 wrote about the Tonkawa camp at Republic Square: "Early Days In City Of Austin" (*The Austin Statesman*, Apr 2, 1905). This was another of O'Dell's cited sources. In the same article she also wrote about Austin during the evacuation of 1842. But,

- she never gives a date on the camp

- puts the duration of the camp at months, not years, as claimed by Walsh and O'Dell
- never makes a connection between the two events, i.e. the camp and Austin evacuation
- and the stories appear in two separate parts of her article

Surely someone (Mary Mitchell) who was part of the extended family of Robertson, Robertson having been attached to the Jones battalion as physician and then the mayor of Austin during this period, would have heard about and recorded a story about the Tonkawa camp being associated with the 1842 evacuation, and the City of Austin extending an invitation to the tribe for protection.

Mary Smith Mitchell's account simply doesn't back up either Walsh or O'Dell's claims: no statement the camp was in 1842; camp duration is months, not years; it's in two separate parts of her article.

There is another aspect to the Mitchell article that raises questions: she refers to ritualistic cannibalism by the Tonkawa in "... their camp, on the old court house square [Republic Square] ...". It is hard to believe citizens of Austin regardless of camp date would have allowed this in the city limits. The claim is based in some part on other sources; it is surely a conflation of stories told about the Tonkawa elsewhere and the camp in Austin. It is further evidence that the Mitchell article cannot be taken as completely historically accurate.

Post-1862 return of Tonkawa to Austin during Civil War; was "1842" Walsh's Confusion, Conflation or Typo?

If you read the Walsh article carefully, he never refers to the evacuation of Austin in 1842 as the event from which Austin and the Tonkawa were requiring "mutual protection". A little odd that he would refer to 1842, but then not mention to the reader the significance of such a seminal year in Austin's history. This seems to argue for interpretation #3 of Walsh's article: he doesn't mention the evacuation of Austin because he was talking about events after 1862.

After the attack on the Tonkawa in 1862, "Tonkawa had begun drifting further south into Texas by the summer of 1863 ... Some survivors found their way back to central Texas including near Austin ..." (*TxDOT Tribal Histories*, *Tonkawa Tribe*, p.22). O'Dell also mentions this in his white paper with additional references.

Had Walsh conflated the events post-1862 with 1842; was he remembering a camp in Austin after their return in 1863? Or was 1842 a slip of the tongue (or memory) or a newspaper typo.

The latter seems the simplest explanation. If you look at what Walsh said, but plug in 1862 rather than 1842, it fits the documented history of the Tonkawa after the 1862 massacre well; let's do that below:

"*In [1862] these Indians [Comanches and other tribes] made an united attack on the Tonks (sic) and almost entirely wiped them out. A short time afterwards [ca.1863], the remnant, about two hundred and fifty, came to Austin..."*

This may also explain an otherwise curious quote from Walsh; the Tonkawa were encamped in Austin for

"mutual protection" for *two years*. What is the significance of two years? Consider that 1863 + 2 = 1865. The Civil War ended in 1865 and Austin, a Confederate State, was then surrendered to the United States and occupied by Union troops. No more need for "mutual protection". And at this time management of "Indian affairs" passed from the C.S.A. to the United States.

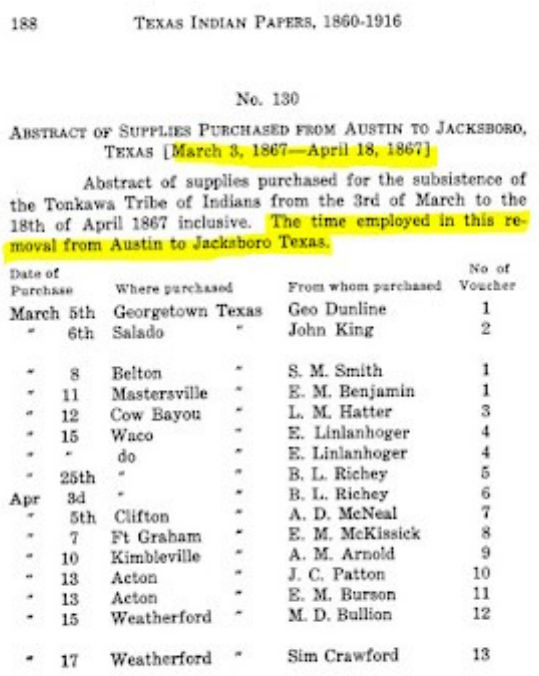
The figure below is from the *Texas Indian Papers* documenting the removal of Tonkawa from ***Austin*** north to Jacksboro in 1867. If the Tonkawa started migrating to Austin and surroundings ca.1863, a camp in Austin of Walsh's cited two years (or Mary Mitchell's camp of months) seems plausible. See also (*TxDOT Tribal Histories, Tonkawa Tribe*, p.24). That same year (1867) the Tonkawa were then resettled on a reservation near Fort Griffin in Shackelford County (McGowen, Stanley S. *The Texas Tonkawas*, p.20).

This abstract below shows the stops on the way to Jacksboro. Vouchers on each day show expenses and also number of persons. The number shrinks from 135 to 103 by trips end, presumably in part some deciding along the way this wasn't such a good idea after all. A starting number of 135 begs the question, *how many were in Austin to begin with* -- 200 (Mitchell) 250 (Walsh)? -- some of whom may have decided up front that having made the long trip south to Austin after the 1862 massacre they were simply not going to go back and left on their own for elsewhere they deemed safer (like Mexico, out of the reach of the U.S. Gov't).

That there may have been many that decided to not go north is made plausible by a letter written by John Lovejoy, the Indian agent in charge of the move; he reported that upon arriving in Austin they (the Tonkawa) were "... seemingly much dissatisfied and *manifesting an unwillingness to leave [Austin]*, however, I gave the orders, and soon everything was in readiness to move." (*Dallas Herald, Saturday*, May 18, 1867, p.3).

An "unwillingness to leave" Austin: Walsh's camp of 250 (or Mitchell's 200), 135 willing to leave initially, and 103 making it all the way. Alternatively that a camp of 250 at Republic Square dwindled after 1865, the end of Civil War. Another newspaper that year put the number at 150 in Austin (*The State Rights Democrat.* (La Grange, Tex.) Friday, March 22, 1867, p.2). Plausible numbers all around.

A final note: McGowen gives the number resettled to Fort Griffin as 143; if 103 arrived in Jacksboro before resettlement to Fort Griffin that would indicate a significant portion of those resettled had come from Austin.



188 TEXAS INDIAN PAPERS, 1860-1916

No. 130

ABSTRACT OF SUPPLIES PURCHASED FROM AUSTIN TO JACKSBORO, TEXAS [March 3, 1867—April 18, 1867]

Abstract of supplies purchased for the subsistence of the Tonkawa Tribe of Indians from the 3rd of March to the 18th of April 1867 inclusive. The time employed in this removal from Austin to Jacksboro Texas.

Date of Purchase	Where purchased	From whom purchased	No of Voucher
March 5th	Georgetown Texas	Geo Dunline	1
" 6th	Salado "	John King	2
" 8	Belton "	S. M. Smith	1
" 11	Mastersville "	E. M. Benjamin	1
" 12	Cow Bayou "	L. M. Hatter	3
" 15	Waco "	E. Linlanhoger	4
" "	do "	E. Linlanhoger	4
" 25th	" "	B. L. Richey	5
Apr 3d	" "	B. L. Richey	6
" 5th	Clifton "	A. D. McNeal	7
" 7	Ft Graham "	E. M. McKissick	8
" 10	Kimbleville "	A. M. Arnold	9
" 13	Acton "	J. C. Patton	10
" 13	Acton "	E. M. Burson	11
" 15	Weatherford "	M. D. Bullion	12
" 17	Weatherford "	Sim Crawford	13

Texas Indian Papers document that from March to April 1867 members of the Tonkawa tribe were being escorted *back* north out of Austin. See also *TxDOT Tribal Histories, Tonkawa Tribe*, p.24, and *Dallas Herald, Saturday*, May 18, 1867, p.3

So what would Walsh's claim of "mutual protection" mean if the Tonkawa camp from his story was during the Civil War post-1862 massacre? Remember, Walsh's story never spells out "mutual protection" from whom.

First, one of the factors (there are others) cited for the 1862 Massacre was the Tonkawa support for the Confederacy, while the tribes that attacked them were pro-Union. So fleeing to Austin, a fortified city in the Confederacy during the Civil War, makes sense. Fort Magruder and other fortifications were constructed in Austin anticipating Union attack (https://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=69091). In this sense "mutual protection" takes on a different meaning: for Austinites it is protection from Union forces, and for the Tonkawa protection from pro-Union tribes. And to be sure, during the Civil War, Texas experienced increased raiding by tribes hostile to both Tonkawa and Texans, trying to push back Texas settlement. Post-1862 during the Civil War being inside Austin's fortifications rather than outside would have made sense for the Tonkawa. This makes more sense than seeking refuge in Austin in 1842 when Austin itself was in a weakened state and Bastrop would have been a safer place (see Bollaert above).

IV. Tonkawa Oral History

There was hope some oral history among the Tonkawa Nation itself would help. The TxDOT Tribal Histories

project worked with the tribes that TxDOT, THC, TMD et.al. interface with today on issues such as NAGPRA; unfortunately the report developed with the Tonkawa is silent on this topic (link below).

https://www.txdot.gov/business/resources/environmental/compliance-toolkits/historic-resources/tribal-histories.html

More research needed.

V. Conclusion

This chapter of the Tonkawa / Austin history is definitely an undertold topic. While this article is a critical review of the Walsh article of 1924 and O'Dell's published claims, I do appreciate the work being done on a documentary film. But it is also important to honor the Tonkawa by telling as truthful a story on this topic as is historically possible as we move forward with a possible historical marker. That is *literally* one of the jobs County Historical Commissions are tasked with by the Texas Historical Commission.

On balance, a camp after the 1862 massacre from 1863 through 1865 when the Civil War ended, seems most plausible, jives with Walsh's story (explained as a one digit typo) and is better documented in the history of the Tonkawa leading up to their relocation out of Austin starting in 1867. There is a complete absence of supporting primary sources (Walsh's article not being credible as written) looked at thus far, or presented by O'Dell, of the Tonkawa encamped in Republic Square in Austin in 1842-1844. Primary sources and scholarly works place the Tonkawa in places other than Austin during this period, Bastrop appearing to have been the main camp at this time.

The adage "extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence" applies to history. Much more evidence is needed to justify claims being made by O'Dell. Another adage goes, "repeat something often enough and it becomes the truth", the corollary being "once the genie is out of the bottle...". Austin has plenty of stories that simply are not true but which having been repeated so often they are taken to be so; the genie is out of the bottle. The Tonkawa story should not be one of these.

I do wish O'Dell's white paper and subsequent news interview had been better vetted, but again the genie is out of the bottle so we need to strive to ensure any possible marker is carefully thought through. Austin owes that to the Tonkawa.

VI. Links, References, Notes

Snippet of Bob O'Dell interview *“How the Tonkawa Tribe Saved Austin's Capital Status”.* O'Dell describes how Austin "invited" the Tonkawa to Austin for protection thereby ensuring Austin remained the Capital of Texas. https://youtube.com/shorts/MVjKm5s24W4?si=sCnYf0nF7gDnvrl2

"Tonkawa Tribe honored for pivotal role in Austin's foundation after 140 years", by John-Carlos Estrada, CBS

Austin:

https://cbsaustin.com/news/local/story/tbt-tonkawa-tribe-honored-for-pivotal-role-in-austins-foundation-after-140-years-chief-russell-martin-filmmaker-bob-odell-racheal-starr

‘Austin has done almost nothing’. Thanking the Tonkawa for saving the capital of Texas. Michael Barnes' interview of Bob O'Dell, *Austin American Statesman*, 05/07/2024

How The Tonkawa Tribe Came to Live in Austin Texas. Bob O’Dell, August 2, 2023 Version 1.0

'Austin has done almost nothing': Time to thank the Tonkawa for saving the capital of Texas. Bob O'Dell's film website. Retrieved 10/4/2024.

https://www.tonkawathemovie.com/news/austin-has-done-almost-nothing-time-to-thank-the-tonkawa-for-saving-the-capital-of-texas

There is another news article from 1913 that references the Tonkawa in Austin, but O'Dell has I believe rightly chosen to not cite that article. It is anonymously written, and appears to be parroting other sources which are uncited, plus gives numbers of Tonkawa in the camp that don't jive with Walsh, and uses derogatory language in describing their presence (not invited): "HERE IS STORY OF AUSTIN FROM DAYS WHEN STOCKADE WAS PROTECTION FROM INDIANS", *The Austin Statesman*, Jan 19, 1913

Some Sources Referenced (no particular order) for this Article

Nance, *ATTACK AND COUNTERATTACK: The Texas-Mexican Frontier, 1842*.

Buffalo Hump, Shilz and Shilz

Connelly, Did David Crockett Surrender at the Alamo?, *The Journal of Southern History*, 1960 (relates to George M. Dolson)

Smithwick, *Evolution of a State*

Michno, *Fate Worse Than Death*

Frank Brown, *Annals of Austin and Travis County*

Historical Marker Database (HMDB.ORG)

John Holland Jenkins, *Recollections of Early Texas*

Andrew J. Sowell, *Rangers and Pioneers of Texas*

John Smith letter on 1843 raid on Austin, Briscoe

Julia Lee Sinks, Quarterly, Texas State Historical Association, 1900

Newspapers (*primary*) from that period. Sources used were Portal to Texas's newspapers which allows searching by date; also Newspapers.com. When searching the newspapers one has to keep various spellings in mind, e.g. "Tonkewas", "Tonkaways"

Oakwood Cemetery records

Jeff Kerr, *Republic of Austin*

Jeff Kerr, *Seat of Empire: Embattled Birth of Austin*

Pierce, *Texas Under Arms*

The Indian Papers of Texas and the Southwest 1825-1916. Re-print of a historical compilation of Native American papers in the American Southwest region. Winfrey, Dorman H. & Day, James M. 1995.

The Texas Tonkawas, McGowen

Travis County Clerks' probate records; deed records

TxDOT Tribal Histories, Tonkawa Tribe (written in conjunction with tribe)

Wilbarger's *Indian Depredations in Texas*

William Bollaert's Texas, paperback printing 1989

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Hasskarl, THE CULTURE AND HISTORY OF THE TONKAWA INDIANS, Plains Anthropologist , November, 1962.

Bonham, Dora Dieterich, *Merchant to the Republic*, book, 1958; San Antonio, Texas. (https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth1013938/: accessed October 16, 2024)

Himmel, Kelly F., *The Conquest of the Karankawas and the Tonkawas, 1821-1859*, Elma Dill Russell Spencer Series in the West and Southwest, Texas A&M University Press, 1999

Sjoberg, THE CULTURE OF THE TONKAWA, A TEXAS INDIAN TRIBE, THE TEXAS JOURNAL OF SCIENCE, 1953 (cited in the TxDOT report developed with tribe)

Latham, Francis. *Travels in the Republic of Texas*, 1842.

[1] An incident in Oklahoma in which reservations Indians of various tribes -- Shawnee, Delaware, Kickapoo, Caddo, Comanche, and Kiowa -- attacked the Tonkawa on their reservation killing by some estimates nearly half the Tonkawa tribe. See *TxDOT Tribal Histories* report developed in conjunction with tribe. https://www.txdot.gov/business/resources/environmental/compliance-toolkits/historic-resources/tribal-histories.html